

Reply to Comments by Progress Energy regarding Proceeding 04-37

I find the response from Progress Energy regarding the complaints of local hams very troubling. First, their allegation that hams were using “sophisticated & sensitive equipment” is simply untrue. In fact, the equipment consisted of an ICOM 706 mkII mobile HF transceiver ... one of the least costly HF rigs available today. And mobile HF antennas are inefficient. Second, it’s my understanding that a “trial” is used to evaluate both the strengths and weaknesses of a proposed technology. Discounting the effects of BPL on mobile amateur communications (due to the 30 seconds of impacted travel) ignores the impact of rolling out such technology beyond a trial neighborhood.

Progress Energy’s position is that there is “no harmful interference”, but I beg to differ. Progress Energy has failed to avoid all of the amateur frequencies – in spite of their best efforts. And, the notching of certain frequencies still leaves the amateur with harmful interference, albeit attenuated. The very nature of amateur communications has us seeking low amplitude signals to make distant (or QRP) contacts. If the Progress Energy arguments are adopted, I can assure you that I will have been harmed when they roll out BPL.

If BPL is an authorized Part 15 technology, the rules need to take into consideration its continuous operation ... unlike the low duty cycle garage door openers, etc. As such, responsiveness to interference complaints must be more clearly defined. The Progress Energy comments seek to avoid automatic equipment shutdown in order to avoid inconvenience to broadband subscribers. But, they fail to recognize that those being harmfully interfered are the LICENSED users of the spectrum they are corrupting.

Lastly, the visit by the FCC Chairman to the local trial site enabled a great photo op, but the chairman passed on an opportunity to hear the interference from that same trial. As an FCC licensed operator, I fear for protection of our spectrum when the FCC chairman fails to assess the very real harmful interference caused by the Progress Energy BPL trial. Contained within Progress Energy’s comments they state “... hams expect no interference”. So, we know they heard the right message ... but, do they understand it?

We seek faint signals! If you interfere with this, it’s harmful interference!